

TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY

Socorro ISD

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

INV2020-02-122

Appendix Q

APPENDIX Q

During the course of the special investigation the subject of this report, the agency received a number of additional complaints mostly regarding board conduct at Socorro ISD. These complaints, numbered below, have not been fully investigated at the time of this Final Report. These complaints have been resolved through settlement and therefore investigations will not be completed in their regular course. The complaints are summarized below as they were received by the agency. It is important to note that the following items are a summary of the complaints only. They do not indicate a substantiation of the complaints by the agency and are not the findings of an investigation, but the subject of these complaints are forwarded to the Board and to the appointed Conservator(s) as an aid to further necessary reforms.

I. Complaint INV2021-06-040

On June 4, 2021, a complaint was received by the agency alleging that a member of the Socorro ISD school board of trustees, Ricardo Castellano, threatened and bullied a district administrator. The complaint alleged that the board member and his wife, a teacher in the district, stated that administrators needed to “be on board with the new leadership otherwise we would die”. In a subsequent communication, the complainant alleged that the board member retaliated against them for filing the original complaint with the agency, directing employees to file complaints against them that are “not warranted”.

II. Complaint INV2021-06-042

On June 4, 2021, a complaint was received by the agency from a Socorro ISD teacher, alleging that a member of the Socorro ISD school board of trustees, Pablo Barrera, harassed them. The complainant stated that the trustee sought them out to discuss why the trustee’s child was not admitted to a magnet program under the teacher’s oversight. The complaint alleged that the trustee “kept switching roles between parent and trustee” in the discussion and that the complainant felt attacked and harassed.

III. Complaint INV2021-08-103

On August 22, 2021, a complaint was received by the agency from a Socorro ISD teacher who identified herself as the wife of Socorro ISD school board trustee member Ricardo Castellano. She alleged that the principal at her campus of employment reprimanded her as retaliation for going to district administrators with campus concerns. The reprimands alleged failure to provide lesson plans for days that she was absent and for violating district policy in letting her husband, the board trustee, gain access to the campus without completing visitor protocols.

IV. Complaint INV2022-02-159

On February 23, 2022, a complaint was received by the agency from a Socorro ISD parent or guardian, alleging that members of the board of trustees stated in front of board meeting attendees that they voted down proposed hiring candidates because of a personal issue with the interim superintendent.

V. Complaint INV2022-09-112

On September 20, 2022, a complaint was received by the agency from a Socorro ISD teacher who identified herself as the wife of Socorro ISD school board trustee member Ricardo Castellano. She alleged that the Interim Superintendent of the district has ordered law enforcement to intimidate the complainant and her husband during their attendance at a game. She also separately alleged that another board member at that same game, stared at her “with anger” and the complainant indicated that she felt threatened.

VI. Complaint INV2022-12-125

On December 16, 2021, a complaint was received by the agency from a principal at Socorro ISD. The principal alleged that one of her staff, the wife of Socorro ISD school board trustee member Ricardo Castellano, threatened her. She also alleged that Member Castellano refused to complete visitor protocols when entering the campus and was there almost daily during instructional time.

VII. Complaint INV2023-01-157

On January 30, 2023, a complaint was received by the agency from a parent in Socorro ISD. The complaint alleged that Career and Technical Education funds were being misappropriated in the district.

VIII. Complaint INV2023-09-188

On September 24, 2023, a complaint was received by the agency from a parent in Socorro ISD. The complaint alleged violations of the Texas Open Meetings Act due to “walking quorums” as well as inappropriate financial spending.

IX. Complaint IR2023-01-002

On January 10, 2023, staff within the agency made an internal referral to investigate an audio recording that appeared to show two board members, Castellano and Barrera, discussing engaging in board overreach and retaliation against the principal of the campus on which one of their wives worked as a teacher. The audio recording appeared to refer to their desire to involve themselves in several personnel issues in the district.

X. Complaint INV2023-11-173

On November 28, 2022, a complaint was received by the agency from a community member in Socorro ISD. The complaint alleged that the superintendent of Socorro ISD called law enforcement to come to the district offices when parents, including an unnamed school board trustee, came to discuss an issue.

XI. Complaint INV2024-11-175*

On November 17, 2023, a complaint was received by the agency from Socorro ISD board trustee, Ricardo Castellano. The complaint alleged that the board violated its own board policies in placing and removing items from the board agenda.

*Complaint INV2024-11-175 was not listed in the settlement agreement, due to the timing of the drafting of the agreement. However, it is included here as it will be closed as a consequence of the agreement.